

AMENDMENTS TO THE DRAWINGS

In Figure 10, reference numeral "285" has been amended to read --286--.

In Figure 10A, reference numeral "282" has been amended to read --287--.

In Figure 17, block 386, the text "non-projected" has been amended to read --non-protected--.

Corrected drawing sheets in compliance with 37 C.F.R. §1.121(d) are submitted herewith.

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REMARKS

This paper is responsive to the Office Action mailed August 26, 2005. In the Office Action, the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (hereinafter "the Office") objected to the drawings for certain informalities. Claims 13-24, 29-30, and 33 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,618,858, issued to Gautier (hereinafter "Gautier"). Claim 35 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Gautier. Claims 25-28, 31-32, and 34 were rejected as being unpatentable over Gautier in view of U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2005/0028208, issued to Ellis et al. (hereinafter "Ellis"). Claims 13-35 are pending in the present application.

Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the application. The Gautier and Ellis references fail to teach or suggest all of the elements recited in Claim 13-35. Claims 13-35 have not been amended and for the reasons discussed below, the claims should be allowed.

Prior to discussing the Office Action and the cited art, applicants provide the following overview of the present application, after which applicants discuss in detail the reasons why Claims 13-35 are patentable. The following discussion of embodiments is provided for purposes of illustration and not to define the scope of any of the claims, nor is it exhaustive in describing all the patentable features of the invention.

The Present Application

The present application describes a user model for multimedia communication network systems, including but not limited to interactive television systems. In one aspect, the user model organizes access devices into households. A household, for example, may have various access devices such as television set top boxes (STBs), personal computers (PCs), personal digital assistants (PDAs), cell phones, etc. The access devices are used for communication and consumption of media.

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In the user model of the present invention, the household has a "household object" associated therewith. Each access device in the household has a corresponding "access device object" associated therewith. The access device objects are logical extensions of each other in the household object. For simplicity of discussion herein, a household object may otherwise be referred to as a "household" and an access device object may otherwise be referred to as an "access device."

In addition, each household can have multiple "user objects" representing multiple users or user profiles. For example, consider a household in which each of the parents and children of a family are represented by a corresponding user object in the household. Attributes and data associated with each user object may be used to define different access privileges possessed by each user in the household. A user object for a child may include a channel list that permits the child to access only those channels deemed appropriate by the child's parents. A user object for a parent may grant the privilege of purchasing pay per view programming that otherwise is withheld from a child. Different media access privileges for different users can be controlled by the different user objects in the household.

Each user object in a household has its own independent configuration of attributes and data. This aspect of the present invention allows a user to create or reconfigure a user object by logging on to an authorized user object at any one of the access devices of the household. In one aspect, the other access devices (if any) in the household may automatically receive the user object information of a new or reconfigured user object without any further action by the user. This aspect advantageously allows a single operation to configure and/or reconfigure all of the access devices in a household with the information of a new or revised user object.

In another aspect, when a user adds a new access device to the household, the new access device may receive the user object information of user objects already existing in the household,

without any further action by the user. In one embodiment, an automatic exchange of user object information is coordinated by a server that stores the configuration information of each household and its associated user objects. This server, for example, can be operated by a multiple service operator (MSO) or service provider. Alternatively, the server may be at a broadcast center for a satellite broadcast system.

In another aspect, the information of a user object may be updated using a revision information file. An access device sends updated user object information to a server when a user changes the user object information of a user object via that access device. In one embodiment, the server receives the updated user object information and stores the updated information in a file corresponding to the user object. In addition, the server creates an update entry for the received update information, which is stored in a list. The update entry includes a ticket number and a bit vector, with the bit vector corresponding to the updated information being set.

Claims 13-35 Are Patentable Over Gautier and Ellis

Turning now to the Office Action, applicants have carefully considered the Gautier and Ellis references and the discussion in the Office Action, and respectfully request reconsideration of the claim rejections based on Gautier and Ellis.

For the convenience of the Examiner, Claim 13 is repeated as follows:

13. A method of providing configuration information for at least one user object to an access device in a multimedia communication network system having a server and a plurality of access devices, access devices of the plurality of access devices being associated with one or more households, the method comprising:

receiving information that an access device is being associated with a household;

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determining whether the access device is the household's first access device; and

providing to the access device configuration information for at least one user object associated with the household when the access device is not the first access device of the household.

As noted above, independent Claim 13 is directed to a method used in a multimedia communication network system. The network includes a plurality of access devices that are associated with a household. Also associated with the household is at least one user object. After receiving information that an access device is being associated with the household, the method determines whether the access device is the household's first access device, and if the access device is not the first access device of the household, the method provides configuration information for the user object to the access device associated with the household.

Notably, Gautier lacks any disclosure that teaches or remotely suggests organizing devices or users in the manner that is claimed, namely an organization in which access devices and user objects are associated with a household.

According to Gauthier, when a viewer connects an "advanced set top box" (ASTB) to the network disclosed by Gautier, the viewer may set up a viewer account that includes a user id (UID) and a network id (NID). Upon connecting additional ASTBs or other devices to the network, the viewer can separately establish viewer accounts on the additional devices that map to the UID-NID of the initial viewer account.

A different user establishing his or her own viewer account on an ASTB is given a different UID-NID. In other words, the binding of user information to a UID-NID in the network is individual to users. There is no teaching or suggestion of an organization in which different users (represented by user objects) and different access devices are associated with a

common household. To the contrary, according to Gautier, multiple users in the same house may have different viewer accounts with different UID-NID information. There is no direction in Gautier to associate the users in a house with a common household object, nor is there direction to associate user objects representing the users with a common household object. The UID-NID information for a user is not unique to a household; rather, the information is unique to each viewer.

It should also be understood that a viewer account is not equivalent to a user object as claimed in the present application. According to Gautier, each time the same user wants to establish a viewer account on a different ASTB, the user has to go through a complicated process of creating the viewer account on the ASTB. See, e.g., col. 9, lines 12-35 of Gautier.

Further, it should be understood that a network identity (NID) is not equivalent to a household, as claimed in the present application. Different users in the same house may have different viewer accounts with different NID information. See, e.g., col. 8, line 66 to col. 9, line 11 of Gautier.

In support of the rejection of Claim 13, the Office cited Gautier at Figure 2A, step 204, and col. 5, lines 35-40, as allegedly disclosing the claim element "receiving information that an access device is being associated with a household." Applicants respectfully disagree that Gautier discloses this claim element. There is no teaching or suggestion that an "access device is being associated with a household." Instead, step 204 and the subsequent steps in Figure 2A concern only the connection of an ASTB to a network and after validation, binding the ASTB with the network id (NID) of a particular viewer account. A different viewer with a different NID, albeit in the same house, must separately establish their viewer account on the ASTB, precisely because Gautier does not suggest associating user objects with a household, as claimed in the present application. In the present application, where user objects (representing users) are

associated with a household, the configuration information for the user object(s) in the household can be automatically provided to the access device being added to the household.

The Office further cited Figure 2A, step 206, and col. 5, lines 41-49, as allegedly disclosing the claim element “determining whether the access device is the household's first access device.” Again, after carefully reviewing Figure 2A and the cited passage, and indeed the entire disclosure of Gautier, applicants do not find disclosure that anticipates this element of Claim 13. In Gautier, there is no notion of organizing user objects and access devices in a household. Further, the process of entering a registration code on an MSO home page does not teach or suggest “determining whether the access device is the household's first access device.”

Lastly, the Office cited passages at col. 9, lines 11-35 of Gautier as allegedly disclosing the claim element “providing to the access device configuration information for at least one user object associated with the household when the access device is not the first access device of the household.” Again, after carefully reviewing the cited passage, applicant does not believe Gautier provides disclosure that anticipates this claim element. The Examiner contends: “Disclosed by Gautier is if an existing viewer wants to use services on another ASTB, the viewer needs to bind the viewer account to the existing NID.” Applicants respond by noting that the process of establishing a new viewer account on another ASTB, even if the new viewer account is bound to a user's existing NID, does not teach or suggest that the viewer account is “associated with [a] household.” Recall, as discussed earlier, a viewer's NID is not equivalent to a “household” as different users in the same house may have different NIDs. Applicants further specifically deny that viewer accounts, as taught by Gautier, are equivalent to user objects, as claimed in the present application. Additionally, the process in Gautier does not take into account the claimed link in “providing to the access device configuration information for at least one user object associated with the household *when* the access device is not the first access

device of the household.” Without the notion of a "household" as claimed in the present application, Gautier neither determines whether an access device is the first access device of the household nor provides configuration information of a user object associated with the household when the access device is not the first access device of the household. When Gautier indicates "another ASTB" at col. 9, line 13, the ASTB could be anywhere in the world. See col. 4, lines 27-30. Even if the ASTBs are in the same house, it is clear from Gautier that the ASTBs are not collectively associated with a "household", as claimed in the present application. Gautier is concerned only with a user having multiple viewer accounts that may, if desired, map back to a single network identify for that user. See col. 2, lines 64-67.

Gautier does not anticipate the above-recited elements of Claim 13. Therefore, applicants respectfully request reconsideration and allowance of Claim 13.

Claims 14-15 and 22-35 are also patentable for their dependence on Claim 13. Applicants have carefully reviewed Ellis and do not find disclosure in Ellis that overcomes the deficiencies in Gautier discussed above.

In addition, Claims 14-15 and 22-35 are patentable for the additional features they recite. For example, Claim 15 recites "further comprising providing to the access device a ticket number corresponding to the configuration information received from the user." Applicants submit that this feature is not shown or suggested by Gautier or Ellis. A user's UID in Gautier is not equivalent to a ticket number as claimed. An interpretation of a UID in Gautier as a ticket number is inconsistent with the present application, including for example, the role a ticket number plays in other claims, such as Claim 35. A user's UID in Gautier does not change with updates to a user's viewer account information.

As a further example, Claim 22 recites the method of Claim 13, wherein "information that the access device is being associated with the household is automatically received in

response to a user coupling the access device to the multimedia communication network system." Claim 25 recites "wherein, when the access device is not the first access device of the household, the configuration information for the at least one user object is automatically provided to the access device" and Claim 27 recites "wherein the configuration information for all of the user objects is automatically provided to the access device." Such automatic communication of information as claimed in the present application is not taught in the disclosures of Gautier and Ellis. The coordination of multiple interactive television program guides in Ellis is not applicable in that neither Gautier nor Ellis discuss associating user objects and access devices with a household, in the first place.

Reconsideration of Claims 14-15 and 22-35 is requested.

Claims 16 and 19 recite a configuration system and a machine-readable medium, respectively, that include elements similar to those discussed above with respect to Claim 13. For the reasons expressed above with respect to Claim 13, Claims 16 and 19 are also in allowable condition.

Lastly, Claims 17-18 and 20-21, which are dependent on Claims 16 and 19, respectively, are also patentable for their dependence on Claims 16 and 19 and for the additional subject matter recited therein. Reconsideration and allowance of Claims 17-18 and 20-21 is requested.

Amendments to Specification and to Drawings

In the Office Action, the Office objected to Figure 14 as depicting method steps 322 and 324 which were not described in the specification. To correct this, applicants have amended the specification as indicated above. The subject matter in Figure 14 is considered as originally disclosed upon the filing the present application. No new matter has been added to the application.

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Furthermore, the Office objected to Figures 10, 10A, and 17. Applicants submit herewith replacement drawing sheets that correct the minor typographical errors in the reference numerals and text in the drawings. Applicants thank the Examiner for identifying these errors and providing applicants an opportunity to correct the same. No new matter has been added by these drawing corrections.

CONCLUSION

Applicants respectfully submit that the claims in the present application are in allowable condition and request a notice to that effect at an early date. Should the Examiner identify any issues needing resolution prior to allowance of the application, the Examiner is invited to directly contact the undersigned counsel by telephone.

Respectfully submitted,

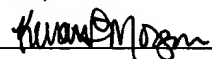
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Date: 27 December 2005

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